1: Grigson G-5 (1927-1934) 1949
AW32 Gond AW32
Hill Maria

CHAPTER VI

VILLAGES, HOUSES AND THEIR CONTENTS

A. Hill Maria Villages, Houses and their Contents

361 THE site of the Hill Maria village is in these days almost entirely determined by its convenience as a centre from which to cultivate the *penda* slopes of the year. Peace has reigned in the Abujhmar hills from time immemorial, and no question of defence arises when a village is built. A possible relic of former unsettled times [349] is the custom of building stone cairns and seats as look-outs at the head of passes or the summits of hills on the paths leading to villages; but these are convenient watching places for herdsmen when their cattle are grazing around the hill-tops, and serve also to mark the line of the paths which, in the rains, are overgrown with rank grass, or fall into disuse when villages or *penda* slopes are abandoned for alternative sites. Certain well-defined tracks 487 through the hills are cleared annually by the villagers; these often avoid the actual village sites, to which side tracks connect them. There are no carts in the hills, and therefore the tracks are only foot-paths, generally wide enough only for a party to walk in single file, though at the periodic clearings the grass is cut down to a width of two or three feet on each side of the path. The village 361 boundary is usually marked by a cairn of stones, in the centre of which may be planted a pole ornamented at the top with bunches of grass or peacock or jungle-cock feathers, the pole being further adorned by peeling off bands of bark at intervals throughout its length. The boundary itself is usually a stream, and the cairns of the two villages are usually twenty or thirty yards apart, so that [783] when the annual *pira-mansha* (called by the Bison-horn Marias *rog-burria* and by Halbi-speakers *boharani*) ceremony of ridding the village of disease takes place, the old winnowing-fans with the sweepings of each house can be hung up beyond the boundary on this no-man's-land without leaving them on the lands of the neighbouring village.

These paths cross streams by stepping-stones, by logs felled 487 across the stream, by small raised embankments pierced by hollowed 491 tree trunk pipes for the passage of the water and revetted with horizontally laid logs, or by bridges consisting of a plank supported by bamboo wicker-work cylinders filled with boulders resting on

1: Grigson G-5 (1927-1934) 1949
AW32 Gond AW32
Hill Maria
Bison Horn Maria

622 kingdoms or *garhs* of forgotten chiefs, or divisions of the early
623 medieval Telanga kingdoms of Barsur, Dantewara or Bhajramgarh.
632 The Marias there are perhaps later arrivals, spread over a land once ruled by comparatively civilized and organized Telanga princes. There are *pargana* headmen, with wide influence and authority; but their authority possibly does not derive in the same sense from the clan, and may have been conferred in the not very distant past by the State because of the obvious advantages of having such central intermediaries between the State and the tribes. They have to deal with villages of many different clans, and far larger villages at that than those of the Hill Marias. These villages are still throwing off new *para* or hamlets, which often become bigger than the parent village, and soon for practical reasons have to have their own *peda* and *perma*, though these will be called the *chudala*, or small, in contrast to the *birya*, or big, *peda* and *perma* of the parent village. Among the Bison-horn Marias, therefore, it is natural to find the village *panchayat* exercising a more real authority and greater independence of the *pargana* headman and *panchayat* than among the Hill Marias. Nevertheless the formal recognition under the recent State orders of the *pargana* headman and his *panchayat* as a court of appeal from the judicial decisions of the village elders is bound to strengthen his position. The Bison-horn Maria has always been more in contact with and more ready to learn from the outside world than the Hill Maria, and there are many village and *pargana* headmen who show real leadership and force of character.

689 Social offences involving exclusion from tribal ceremonies and
564 feasts are very similar in these days to those of neighbouring Hindu
684 castes. The worst offences are to get maggots in wounds, to take
688 food from or have sexual relations with persons of the despised Ghasia, Malaw or Lohar castes, and to break the rules of exogamy by having sexual relations with a girl of a brother-clan. Another offence, which among the Bison-horn Marias may lead to considerable trouble, is the eating of any new crop or the cutting of grass or bamboo before the appropriate *pandum* has been celebrated; this form of sacrilege is believed to be avenged by the earth or clan-god sending tigers to carry off cattle or men, and in a case which came before me in which such a visitation had followed the cutting of grass by two villagers before the Kare Pandum the *panchayat* had ordered them to compensate the owner of each cow or bullock killed by the avenging tigers. The way in which breaches of the rules of exogamy are dealt with has already been described (pages 245-6 above). Any form of social relations with Ghasia, Malaw or Lohar, however unwitting, entails penalties not only on the actual offender, but also often on his near kinsmen. In the

1: Grigson G-5 (1927-1934) 1949
AW32 Gond AW32
Hill Maria
Bison Horn Maria

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783

1913 case (see page 283 above) in which two Hill Marias murdered a Maria Lohar girl with whom they had been cohabiting, their parents and brothers all had to be purified by the *pargana* headman, and the actual murderers were purified by him a year after the murder; one of the main reasons for the villagers hushing up the crime was the belief that greater harm might have resulted to the clan if the Lohar girl had borne a child to the murderers than from them killing her. In 1926, Oyami Masa of Malhanar in the Kutru Mar hill *pargana*, an orphan boy six years old, was outcasted for taking some food from a Ghasia who was spending the night in the village *kos-gotul*[1] (strangers' rest-house) and found the child half-starved. As soon as the villagers heard of this they regarded him as outcasted. They realized, however, that he could not be expected to pay the expenses of the purification ceremony, and as they themselves had had poor harvests and were not in a position to meet the cost just then, they built a hut for the child at some distance from the rest of the village, and there he had to live for two years, till they could pay to purify him; meanwhile they provided food for him, leaving it for him at some distance from his hut. After two years had elapsed they subscribed eight annas cash as remuneration to Arki Burga of Jegur, the *Sendhia*, ten *paili* of rice and a *paili* of pulse, and invited the *Sendhia* to come and purify the boy. The men of the neighbouring villages of the clan were also asked to attend. At the bidding of the *Sendhia* the villagers built seven small huts in a row, and the boy had to pass through each in turn, each being burnt down as soon as he had passed through it. The *Sendhia* himself then shaved the whole of the boy's head, including even his crown-tuft. This done, the boy was taken to the river, made to bathe thrice and brought back to the village, where the *Sendhia* burnt his tongue with a *karra* (*Odsa marra*) twig, made him drink a little from a cup of milk into which he had dipped a piece of gold, and sprinkled the rest of the milk over the boy and the onlookers. The boy then fetched water, and in this the *Sendhia* boiled the rice and pulses, and served the cooked food to the boy and all the clansmen present. This incident typifies the way in which Marias combine to relieve each other's difficulties. The postponement of the caste feast until the offender has had time to collect all that is necessary is almost a rule of tribal life, and one that might with advantage be copied by the pharasaical elders of Hindu castes in British India. The social offence may offend the clan-god, and so its expiation is the concern of the whole clan, which therefore must help the offender gradually to raise the cost of the expiation ceremonies.

[1] See page 106 above.

1: Grigson G-5 (1927-1934) 1949
AW32 Gond AW32
Hill Ma'ria
Bison Horn Maria

a woman at this time. At the menarche (for which the word used is *kumor utta*, 'the blossoming of the flower'), however, a special hut is built for the girl by women outside the village. A woman of the household brings her food and sleeps with her at night; she must bathe whenever she returns to the house. In some villages, the Marias still make a platform up a tree for the girl, who during the day must hide herself in the forest.

It is very dangerous for anyone to see, let alone to touch, a girl at her menarche. At Tikanpal I was told that if a man saw such a girl as he went through the jungle he should slap her and then go to her parents and after rebuking them, demand a fowl which he should sacrifice; then he should bathe and anoint himself with oil. At Gadapal they said that a man should throw a lump of earth between his legs at the girl, or a stick over his shoulder, and then go home and bathe. Neglect of these precautions might lead to blindness.

At the end of the period—all this refers only to the first period—the girl destroys her hut or platform during the night, throws away her cloth,[1] bathes and returns home before cockcrow. In some villages she is expected to remain for a day or two longer on the veranda of her house: if she has a married elder brother, it is the special duty of his wife to attend to her. Then she puts oil and turmeric on her body—an act which is said to symbolize her formal re-admission into caste, for during the previous days she has been regarded as excommunicated. In many Maria villages, however, the ceremonial use of turmeric is still unknown, and the elder brother's wife carries a pot of water round the house and sprinkles everyone saying, 'Now you are back again in caste'. After this the girl fetches water in an earthen pot and cowdungs the floor. In the evening her father invites some of the elders to a bottle of liquor and says, 'My daughter who was unclean all these days is now clean again'. He sacrifices a fowl to the Departed and they feast on its flesh.

There is not nearly so much fuss about the later periods. The woman has to keep out of the way, but there is no danger in looking at her, and when it is over she just has a bath and resumes her ordinary duties. But even so her daily programme is considerably disturbed. She must not sleep inside the house and, of course, sexual intercourse is strictly forbidden. She must not cook or fetch water or go to work in the fields. She must not touch cattle, pigs

[1] There do not seem to be any special taboos associated with this cloth. But the leaf-cups from which the girl eats at this time are charged with magical potency and if a witch can get hold of them she can afflict the girl with palsy.

2: Elwin E-5 (1935-1942) 1947 AW32 Gond AW32
Muria

case was not stolen, but was given by the husband in compensation for taking a girl away from the ghotul. 585

As they escort the newly married pair to bed the boys and girls sing a characteristic song.

Dulka cho māndo dulka cho māndo,	In the bridegroom's booth,
Parwāto jhulena.	Swings the pigeon.
Dulki cho māndo dulki cho māndo,	In the bride's booth,
Tendhu lotna lot baba lot.	The lizard copulates and copulates.
Pillak bhāji mane re loka bhāji humāty jai re loka.	Spinach is drying on a leaf.
Jora jora tenda hane ai re loka tenda pāni nāhin tiru re loka.	There is a pair of weighted balances (of a well), but he won't use them.
Pulāriguon cho jaliya gānja,	The long-tailed cock of Palari,
Dongriguru cho kāri koma,	The black hen of Dongrigura,
Dandik chalki abhich dahi.	Every moment they want to copulate.

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When everything was over, at Sidhawand the headman and the village elders purified the village from any possible evil introduced by the many visitors. They sprinkled liquor round the houses and offered a chick to the Village Mother. 585 783

V. The Nayanar Marriages: a Different Procedure

Such was the marriage ritual at Sidhawand and Malakot. I believe that a very similar procedure is followed all over eastern Bastar. We must now take a brief glance at the other type of marriage, where the main ceremony takes place at the bridegroom's house and where a number of minor details differ. 585

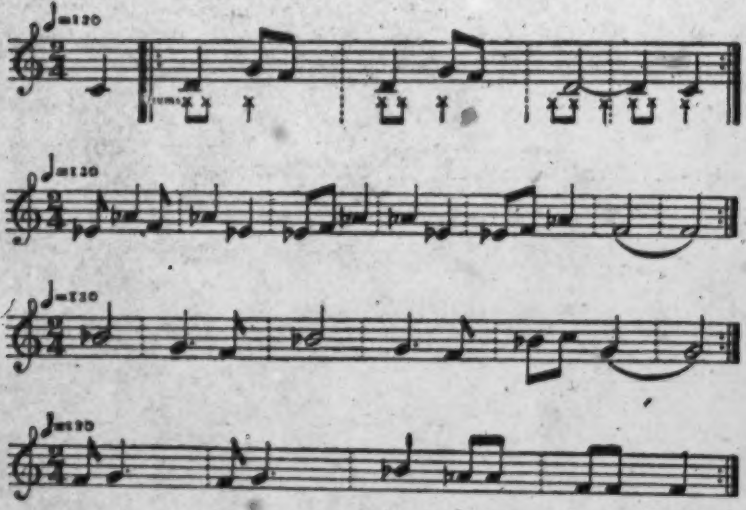
The marriage I am now to describe was celebrated at Amasara and Nayanar on 25 April 1941 and the following days. On the first evening the bride was prepared as at Sidhawand. Her motiari sat round her all night, weeping and consoling her. The next morning the bridegroom, escorted by his chelik and motiari, came to Amasara to fetch her. On the way, at the village boundary, the Gaita made the usual line of ash and offered liquor in three saja leaves, saying, 'Let there be no trouble and no quarrels. Let us return in safety'. They stepped over the line and went on their way, none looking back.

The Farewell Ceremonies

Both parties cooked separately out-of-doors in the fields. During the day there was the usual application of haldi, weeping, exchange of presents and some heavy drinking. When I reached Amasara on the afternoon of this second day, I found a scene of great animation. Several groups of boys were dancing with mandri drums; in another part of the field rows of girls were dancing and singing Reko. Another group of motiari in boy's clothes, with waistcoats and turbans, were preparing for the Jhoria Rudanna when the bridegroom has to recognise his bride amidst a group of dancing motiari disguised as boys, an incident which I study fully in Chapter XVI. In the middle sat a row of old women, sensible to each other, their bodies covered with haldi-water and singing drunkenly.

It was getting late and presently the bride's parents went to the boy's people and said, 'Now you are our daughter's mother and father; we are giving her

THE MURIA AND THEIR GHOTUL



XI. Purifying the Village

Throughout the year ceremonies, called in Halbi *bohorani*, are performed to purify the villages of disease and evil. Old brooms and baskets are collected and carried to the village boundary, and a scapegoat may be consecrated and sent away into the jungle.

Such ceremonies are performed before the Wijja Pandum in May, when the nearest stream or river first comes down in flood in July or August, before the Puna Pandum in September and before the Jata or Pupul Pandum in January. If necessary, it may be repeated before the Marka Pandum. All the year round, in fact, these protective ceremonies continue; apparently they cannot confer permanent immunity.

I will give a detailed description of one of these purificatory rites, the Nartate Kiyana for the purification and protection of Bandopal, which I witnessed on 25 April 1942. We were woken at dawn by the blowing of hunting-horns, at the sound of which the village assembled. The people went first to the shrine of the Village Mother and offered incense there; the mediums took Kusri, Marin Dokari and Hoche Muria, each represented by a bundle of date-palm leaves, out of the shrine. Others carried gourds, aonra rings, iron slag, parched gram, wheat cakes, eggs, chickens, the root of a date-palm, a pig, rice and liquor.

A long procession went round the village boundaries. At every point where a path went out of the village, the Gaita put three bits of iron slag, hammered them into the ground, and touched the place with the palm root. This, by a pleasant fiction, represented the sacrifice of a pig. At the four points of the compass he offered eggs to the Rau or demon of the forest. As they went round the boundaries, the mediums caught the ghosts and spirits of the surrounding jungle—the Bhut and Mirchuk—on the trees with palm leaves and popped them into a gourd which they then shut with a leaf-cup.

MURIA RELIGION

At last the party found a suitable ant-hill, and made seven piles of rice before it, which the Gaita forced the chickens to eat. When their eating had signified that the god had accepted the offering, he killed them. He presented the root representing a pig, two eggs, parched gram and wheat cakes, and buried the gourd full of little demons and the leaves with which they had been caught in the hole of the ant-hill. This isolated and destroyed the evils threatening the village, and closed it with a magic wall against hostile sorcerers.

Later in the morning a Muria, followed by a Muria-Lohar carrying a basket, went with his hammer and some iron slag round the village. He put three 'nails' in every doorway, and each householder gave him two pice worth of mahua flowers for his services.

Such is the Muria method (which has many points of resemblance to Baiga and Pardhan custom) of closing the magic boundaries of a village, and removing its supernatural dangers.

XII. The Birth of a God

On 31 March 1941 there was a very special occasion at Adnar village. The Pupal Korta Tindana was to be celebrated with the delight and pomp which this festival always excites. But an even more important event was the birth of a young god, so young that he had not yet been even named, but was now to be called Chelik Sai.

During the whole of 1940 the people of Adnar had suffered constantly from fever and other diseases. When the Siraha were consulted, the Adnar gods spoke through them saying that a new god had been born and was angry that he was receiving no worship. They were told to go to Bargaon in the Chota Dongar Pargana where they would hear from the god Doko Mudial what they must do. The Kaser-Gaita and the people of Adnar therefore went to visit the Kaser-Gaita of Bargaon. He brought Doko Mudial out of his shrine, and the local mediums asked what was to be done. The god replied that a younger brother of his own had been born, the father being Maria Dokara who lives in the Abujhmar, a god of the Kuhrami clan. He said that the people of Adnar must make the god at once and honour him with a *Poroy-tasna* (name-giving) festival. Doko Mudial, who is an Anga, was then carried out into the jungle on the shoulders of two mediums and he showed where the bamboo for making his younger brother was to be cut. The Gaita of Bargaon offered eggs and liquor to the tree and cut it with a single blow of his axe. He handed it over to the Gaita of Adnar, who took it home.

On the morning of the festival day two members of the Naitami clan, which stands in the *akomdma* relation to the Kuhrami, took the bamboo into the jungle near the Adnar temples and made the new god. They offered eggs and liquor, spun some cord on a takli, and prepared a large bunch of peacock feathers with a special arrow made of virgin iron. There was also a new knife of virgin iron provided by the Muria-Lohar of Rengagondi. Others erected a pole of saja wood and placed a flat stone before it in front of the new temple—a simple open shed—which had been built for the young god. When all was ready the Kaser-Gaita brought the new god and placed him against the pole in front of his house.

Adnar is a *pen-ravar* of no fewer than three separate clans, the Naitami, Kuhrami and Kawasi. Outside the village, about a quarter of a mile from the river, in the forest is a group of seven temples, each a thatched open shed, with the usual flat stone, cooking apparatus and the god slung high against the roof. Before each temple were poles or frames against which the gods

2: Elwin E-5 (1935-1942) 1947 AW32 Gond AW32
Muria

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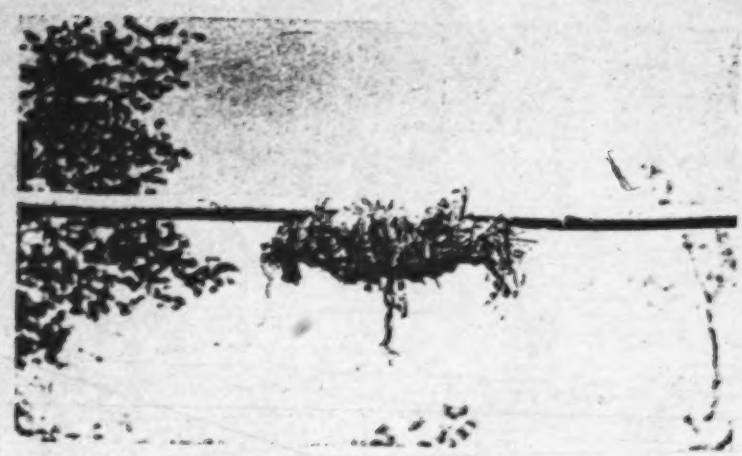

Rubbish hung over the road to purify a village

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Leader of the Diwali dance

Chelik with sacred tree

[p. 464 (A)]

2: Elwin E-5 (1935-1942) 1947 AW32 Gond AW32
Muria

what she was really like, so I went to the house and asked her to lie with me. She asked me what I was doing outside and I said I was drinking in honour of her marriage to me. Although she had been very sweet to me up to that moment, she suddenly cried, 'No, you are simply drinking my urine'. I was drunk and got very angry, and though she tried to prevent me I forced her. But it gave me no pleasure.

Next morning I found the girl was ill. There was no fever or anything we could see, but she lay sick on the ground. I took her to a Siraha and we had to stay with him for a fortnight. I used to give her food and do everything for her, but she got no better. One day I tried to have her again, but she said, 'Wait a moment while I go outside' and she slipped out of the house and ran for her life to her own village. I am sure that my elder wife did some magic to turn this girl's heart away from me. Later I tried to marry another girl, my elder brother's widow, and my wife drove her away also.[1]

VI. Adultery

The Muria have the reputation of observing a very high standard of marital fidelity, and all my observations go to confirm popular report. The incidence of divorce, less than 3 per cent, suggests that they regard marriage as something to persevere in, and while obviously no statistics can be supplied for individual infidelities, social tradition and religious belief are directed towards making adultery both difficult and dangerous.

The Muria, usually so tolerant and gentle, are here exceptionally rigorist. Adultery brings the swift vengeance of heaven not only on the guilty individuals, but on the tribe. A woman's sin can ruin the ritual hunt and in consequence endanger the year's harvest. The vision of priest or medium can be dimmed by the infidelity of a wife, children may suffer and die, tigers may assail the village herds. The guilty pair themselves are visited with a shocking punishment; their bodies become covered with sores and swellings, and a watery dropsy brings a wretched death.

This is no empty danger, as is proved by actual examples. The Solia of Munjmeta told me how his grandfather died of this cause; in Sidhawand, when a man eloped with a married woman, his father died of dropsy and he himself became a permanent invalid. In Lihagaon, one Badru died after an act of adultery. This vengeance comes from the Departed who are the guardians of the purity of family and clan. In Kongera an outraged husband 'set the Departed on the guilty' and wife and lover fell very ill. At Netanar a Muria said that he was only able to preserve his wife's virtue by the help of the Departed whom he constantly invoked for this purpose.

Adultery is suspected when cattle die suddenly, especially if the tongue protrudes and there is a certain kind of watery discharge. The Siraha then

[1] In Indian tradition and folk-lore, the majority of heroes are successfully polygamous—Ramachandra being a notable exception. In the *Katha Sarit Sagara*, the first wife is represented as welcoming her new companions. Suryaprabha married seven wives on seven consecutive days: by his magic powers he was able to divide his body and live with them all at once.—W. M. Penzer, *The Ocean of Story* (London, 1924-5), Vol. I, p. 429. Naravahanadatta had a similar power of self-multiplication (*Ibid.*, Vol. II, p. 477. See also Vol. I, p. 451). Folk-lore wives usually agree—unless they all combine against a youngest favourite. Among Gulela Shah's happy co-wives, Paaj Phul helps her husband to obtain his fourth.—J. H. Knowles, *Folk-Tales of Kashmir* (London, 1888), pp. 466 and 483 and compare M. Frere, *Old Deccan Days* (London, 1929), p. 324. There is an amusing note on the subject in W. McCulloch, *Bengali Household Tales* (London, 1912), pp. 318*f*.

has to divine who is the guilty party in order that peace may be made and danger averted.

Adultery therefore is not only the betrayal of tribal fellowship, the infringement of another's right to property, a breach of sexual tradition, but it is highly dangerous. A sort of public apology has to be made to the betrayed husband and a ceremony of purification performed.

In order to avert their fate, once the matter has become public, the guilty pair go to the Gaita with a pig or goat which he offers to the local deities and the Departed. Then he goes with witnesses to the nearest tank. On a stone he puts two bits of broken earthenware and some dub grass. Everyone present puts one foot on the stone; the Gaita throws water and liquor over the guilty pair who cry, 'Let us not now swell with water. May the Yer Kanyang living in the midst of this water make an end of our sin (*pāp*)'. The seducer then greets the woman's husband and all is forgiven.[1]

A similar ceremony is performed in the *jodidār* ghotul if a chelik goes off with another boy's motiari, or if he sleeps with her in his absence. At Atargaon, where a chelik eloped with another's ghotul-wife, but was brought back after a few days, the ghotul Manjhi took the two 'husbands' out of the village to a place where two paths crossed. He made them stand on either side of the path and put a knife on the ground and above the knife a stone. He made the boys put their right feet on the stone and gave them each seven leaf-cups of water. Seven times they exchanged the cups of water and seven times cups of liquor, and swore to preserve friendship with one another. The seducer promised to pay a heavy fine if it happened again.

There is one type of adultery, however, which does not seem to be taken too seriously. 'Suppose a girl has a ghotul lover.' So they put it at Markabera. 'She elopes with him. They are brought back and she is quickly married to her betrothed. After a few weeks she runs away again to her lover. She is again brought back, again accepted by her husband, though he knows she has slept with her old lover. And then she is happy at last and settles down.' 'It is like getting a new cow,' said the chelik at Nayanar. 'She does not at first like her new home. She runs back to the herd and her former pastures. But we don't beat her for that; we are rather doubly kind.'

In dealing with a motiari-wife, that is not only kind; it is intelligent.

VII. Divorce

Throughout tribal India divorce is easy and generally the wife has the same rights as her husband. Among the Muria divorce on either side is possible, but the stability of their marriage tradition makes it a comparatively rare event. I have already described how divorce can be effected in a *jodidār* ghotul. Similar ceremonies can release a woman from her partner in adult life. These ceremonies, it must be observed, are essentially rites of purification; they are retrospective, having reference to an already existing state of affairs. The actual union with a new partner and the paying of compensation effects the divorce; now husband and wife have to be free, not of each other—for they are that already—but of the dangers that cling to the conduct of one or both.

The ceremonies are the same as those by which a couple taken in adultery are cleared of their fault. Whether the woman returns to her own husband

[1] A similar ceremony is performed to purify a boy who sleeps with a near relative in the ghotul, but in this case a root or cucumber is used instead of a goat for sacrifice.

3: Elwin E-5 (1935-1942) 1943
AW32 Gond AW32
Bison Horn Maria

754A third line is put for making women barren, a fourth line for destroying crops and cattle, and so on.

Then the Guru begins to teach the young men in the name of Nandraj, Bodhraj, Kirkod, Markod, Indor and Bandor. He holds a bamboo stick in his hand and as he recites his mantra he beats the stones in turn, beginning with the uraskal and striking each stone from left to right. He must not, however, touch the danyakal with his stick. The disciples chant the mantra after him, and then one by one they stand up and strike the stones with the stick. By December the whole art of black magic is acquired.

At the beginning of the course of study, the disciples subscribe to buy a pig and chicken for their Guru. At the end they also bring offerings and a pot of rice-beer. On the last day a little rice is placed on the danyakal stone and the chicken brought by the disciples is made to eat it. Then it is killed and the boys feast with their Guru.

*674 754 One homicide not in our list, which occurred at Dhurli, was connected with such a school of magic. A youth named Telami Dhurwa used to go daily to Dogi Para to learn magic from an older man of the same name. The rule here was that from time to time the students should subscribe for a pig and that each should take their instructor a pot of rice-beer. One day Dhurwa and his fellow-students took the required pig and rice-beer, and after their class was finished they feasted with their Guru. On their way home the boys began to quarrel, and Dhurwa and another boy killed a third boy named Hunga. The people at Dhurli said that Hunga's soul [775] was not mingled with the dead because he was learning black magic, and a memorial stone was not erected for the same reason. Hunga in fact became a very dangerous ghost, a Rau [682] Bhut. The two boys were sentenced to short terms of imprisonment as no intention to murder was proved. When [783] Dhurwa was released he had to offer, in addition to the usual ceremonies, a special and expensive sacrifice to his clan-god.

II

THE SORCERER'S METHODS

754 The Maria sorcerer goes about his business in much the same way as elsewhere in India or the world. He may attack

3: Elwin E-5 (1935-1942) 1943
AW32 Gond AW32
Bison Horn Maria

837 get offended, and in their anger kill the cattle and other livestock. When an animal dies for this cause, its tongue protrudes and a watery discharge issues from its mouth. In Dhurli the Maria said that the guilty person might go blind, and in Mathadi we were told how an old woman did actually become blind as a result of betraying her husband. If a wife commits adultery when her husband is absent on a hunting expedition, her act will 'defile the earth' and the hunt will be ruined. The arrows will fly crookedly, and the husband himself may trip over a stump. He may be bitten by a snake or hit with an arrow. If the deceived husband is a magician, his vision will be clouded. If the proper ceremonies are not performed, he may be afflicted with a watery swelling that may cause death.

674 783 If a murder is committed on account of adultery, the families both of the murderer and his victim may suffer from this swelling. To prevent the danger, the elders of each house gather together; they mix milk and water in a leaf-cup of mahua leaves and say, 'These sinned; but let not their sin be on us'. Then a representative of each house drinks a little. The family of the murdered man gives a present (which is called in Halbi *bhul-karcha*) to the family of the murderer. A measure of rice is put under the eaves of the victim's house. In the rice there is placed some thread, a ring and an arrow. The two families feast together on pork and rice, and swear friendship with each other. The arrow remains as witness to their oath. Then the murderer's family [769] take the *bhul-karcha* home, and offer it to the Departed in their own house.

578 787 Quarrels are always dangerous, for they disturb tribal solidarity and may earn the vengeance of the Departed. Indeed it is dangerous even to dream of a quarrel; if you do, you should sacrifice to the Earth the next morning. If husband and wife are known to be constantly at odds with one another, a panchayat is held and one or both may be fined.

783 When Oyami Anda of Harmamunda carried off and married a girl for whom another youth was serving as Lamhada, he not only had to pay compensation for the work done by the other boy, but a ceremony was performed to purify both parties of enmity. Anda stood with the Lamhada

3: Elwin E-5 (1935-1942) 1943
AW32 Gond AW32
Bison Horn Maria

under the thatch by the door of his house. The palm of his right hand was placed below the Lamhada's right hand. On the ground, below their hands, a pile of rice was made, and an arrow placed in it. Then the Waddai climbed on to the roof and poured down water which fell through the thatch on to their hands, and thence to the rice. After this a pig and two chickens were given to the Lamhada to be offered to his ancestors. The Waddai as clan-priest officiated since the Dead of the clan were to be appeased.

A curious story related by Oyami Harma of the same village illustrates the manner in which the Maria expect supernatural punishment to fall upon the criminal. 'Long ago', said Oyami Harma, 'my ancestors, who were a family of seven brothers and one sister, were living beyond Bailadila. A youth of the Uika clan came as Lamhada for the girl, and in due time she was married to him. Twin boys were born, but after a few days one of them died. During Dassara the husband went to Jagdalpur at the invitation of the eldest brother and while he was away his wife together with the wives of the seven brothers went to reap the harvest, taking their two hunting-dogs. The surviving twin was taken with them, and as they were working, he was put to sleep in a swing. While the women were busy in the field, a hare jumped out of a bush and ran towards the baby. The two hunting-dogs chased it, and mistaking the baby for the hare bit him and killed him.

'When the husband returned he asked for his baby, and his wife said, "He has been taken out by our neighbour. First eat your food and then you can play with the child". The husband sat down and ate, and his wife told him what had happened. In the meantime the other brothers told their eldest brother of the child's death, and he was afraid that the bereaved father would revenge himself on him, because it was at his invitation that he had gone to Jagdalpur. So they all decided to run away. The father pursued them saying that it was they who were responsible for the death of his child. They went to Gadapal closely pursued by the angry father. In Gadapal there was a shrine for Kas Pona Pen which was in the form of a bird. This god hid the eldest brother under its wings, and when the father arrived at the shrine, he could find no trace of him. But as he

3: Elwin E-5 (1935-1942) 1943
AW32 Gond AW32
Bison Horn Maria

674 578 595 Section 323, I.P.C. for what he admitted, voluntarily causing hurt to his wife.

At Dugeli I met Bugori and his senior wife Jimme. Bugori, a most attractive young man, had been able to win the affection of two women both of whom appear to have loved him devotedly. Unfortunately Jimme's jealousy knew no bounds, and one day, when the two women were out together working in the jungle, Jimme, who was robust and powerful, tried to kill the younger girl with her axe. But she survived, and Jimme went to jail for three years. During [626] her absence the younger wife remained with Bugori. But when Jimme was due for release, the village held a panchayat and decided that the younger wife must go to live at her mother's house for fear that Jimme might try to kill her again. When Jimme came home, therefore, after Bugori had [783] given the usual feast to the villagers and had purified her of jail defilement, he took her to his house where she has lived very happily and borne him children. He visits his younger wife in her mother's village from time to time, but does not allow her to come to his house for fear of another tragedy.

Markami Handa had two wives, but does not seem to have been able to keep the affection of the younger, an attractive girl about twenty-four years old. She fell in love with another man and he killed the husband to prevent him taking revenge. Marvi Kesa had three wives, and ill-treated the youngest. One day, after he had beaten her, she ran away to her father's house. There was a quarrel there, and Kesa killed his father-in-law. Poyami Masa had two wives, and a Dhobi tried to seduce the elder. The younger discovered the intrigue, and probably thought it was an excellent opportunity to get rid of her rival. She told her husband, and he was so angry that he stabbed the older woman with an arrow and was himself sentenced to life imprisonment.

Tati Harma had three wives. At the time of the tragedy which brings his name into this record, only two were living. The younger wife had borne him four children, but Harma used to beat her constantly saying that she did not work properly and ate too much. So serious were the disputes in the home that a panchayat fined husband and wife four

3: Elwin E-5 (1935-1942) 1943
AW32 Gond AW32
Bison Horn Maria

about ten years ago. 'It was the mahua season and the Chenchu were in the process of distilling liquor when two policemen arrived in the village and arrested the *peddamanchi* and three other men for illicitly distilling liquor. Unused to dealing with aboriginals they failed to reassure the other people that nothing very serious would happen to the four offenders, and apparently even made them believe that more policemen would come and arrest all the villagers. This threat caused, probably much to their own surprise, a general and immediate stampede, and so terrified were the Chenchu that they did not even stop to pick up their small children, but left them wherever they happened to be, and fled into the jungle. The whole day they dared not return to the village, and when they stole back in the evening they found that several of the smallest infants had died from exposure to the burning sun. Yidgaru (Tokal) says that altogether eight children perished on that occasion, and though this may be an exaggeration, it is certain that the child of his brother, who was one of the arrested men, died at that time. Only two of the four men were found guilty and condemned to one month's imprisonment, and strangely enough both died of fever within eight days of their return from jail'.[1]

IV

BEHAVIOUR TOWARDS THE RELEASED CONVICT

When a murderer comes out of jail, before he is admitted to the ordinary privileges of tribal life and sometimes even before he is allowed to enter his house, ceremonies of purification must be performed. These are of two kinds. The first is a straightforward ceremony to purge a man from the defilement of having been in jail and in the hands of the police. This is probably a Hindu idea,[2] and is connected with the fact that in jail prisoners must take food from members of any caste. It is likely that they may be beaten by

[1] C. von Fürer-Haimendorf, *The Chenchus* (Hyderabad, 1943), pp. 287 f.

[2] It is said of a Hindu Sessions Judge in the Central Provinces that after passing sentence of death he would break the pen with which he wrote the judgement and destroy the clothes he wore. He would not eat till he had bathed and undergone a ceremony of purification.

3: Elwin E-5 (1935-1942) 1943
AW32 Gond AW32
Bison Horn Maria

constables, who again may be men of low caste, and they are almost certainly forced at some time to wear handcuffs which is regarded by most Hindus as degrading. A term of imprisonment involves, of course, culture-contact in its most concentrated form, and we need not be surprised to find aboriginal prisoners bringing back from the capital of the State Hindu notions of this kind.

The ceremony, it is interesting to note, bears no relationship at all to the kind of crime that has been committed. For stealing a cow or for the illicit distilling of mahua liquor a man has to undergo the same purification as if he had committed a brutal murder. Even if he is acquitted, the jail contagion is on him and he must free himself of it.

The ceremonies vary from place to place. At Jabeli, where they have had a lot of experience of this sort of thing, the Maria told me that when a man returns from jail he is not at first allowed to enter his house, but must remain outside and the family gives him his food at a distance. He must then go to his Waddai and give him five rupees for some of the water in which his clan-god has been bathed. The priest sprinkles him with this and gives him a little to drink. He sprinkles some of it over the house. Then the released prisoner gives a feast of beef or pork to the village, he is allowed to go into his house, and from that day 'everybody forgets all about it'.

Sometimes the water must be brought from Dantewara. [823] Hemla Bakka, for example, had to get from the Jia water in which the goddess Danteshwari had been bathed. When Doga came out of jail, the Gaita heated a bit of gold in the fire and touched his forehead, mouth, wrists, knees and toes. He dipped the gold in water and sprinkled it over the body. In Pogu Bheji, the priest burnt with a bit of gold the murderer's tongue, the back of his neck and the upper part of his left arm. He made a fire above the gold with branches of the mango, dumar, karanji and mahua trees and sprinkled the hot ashes over his head. Then the people washed him with ghee, milk and haldi water. When he had given a feast he was free of the contagion of the jail.

When Nendi Muya of Dhanikarka was flogged for stealing a cow, he had to sacrifice a pig and a white chicken to Mati Dea, and bring water from the shrine of Lakshmi Devi at

3: Elwin E-5 (1935-1942) 1943
AW32 Gond AW32
Bison Horn Maria

Kuakonda. When Telami Dhurwa returned from jail after killing a man in a drunken quarrel, he offered his clan-god Uru Maru, a pig, a cow and a hen, and had to undergo the usual ceremonies of purification. 783

Apart from these ceremonies, however, the fact that a man has served a sentence for murder has singularly little influence on his social position and domestic happiness. It is true that imprisonment, if it is for a very long term, sometimes acts as an automatic divorce, and women feel that they are at liberty to marry again. But generally wives wait for their husbands to be released, as I found Deve, the wife of Kawasi Borga, waiting for her husband at Doriras. Borga, ten years before, had gone to jail with a life-sentence for killing his uncle. His wife had all the time been well looked after by the villagers, and I found her house substantial and prosperous. Her two sons had been successfully married and were carrying on the business of their home with the help of their wives. 554 558 [586] [593]

People, however, are sometimes afraid to marry a released murderer. Doga of Jabeli must be one of the luckiest young men alive, for after being sentenced to transportation for one murder he was released after three years; whereupon he is said to have killed his wife, was sentenced to death and again got off on appeal. He came to see me armed with a ferocious-looking axe, which had actually been put in evidence at one of his trials as the weapon with which he had committed murder. He was trying to get a new wife, but without success. 'They are all afraid of me', he said, 'for fear I might kill them as well'. But he thought he might possibly get a widow. Another youth who found it very difficult to get a new wife was Hemla Bakka, who killed his wife for committing adultery, and got three years' imprisonment for it. At Aranpur all the girls were frightened of the charming Gutte, who had been in jail for killing a man in a drunken quarrel after a cock-fight. They thought if they displeased him, he might murder them too. 554 582

At Khutepal, Oyami Masa, who was imprisoned for killing his junior wife, seems to have suffered no loss of prestige on account of it. He is a Waddai, and when I was there he 554 558